

ARTICLE APPEARED
ON PAGE A-16NEW YORK TIMES
27 January 1984

WASHINGTON TALK

Briefing

Dissent Secrecy

The secret report on Soviet violations of arms control agreements that the Reagan Administration sent to Congress this week surprised some intelligence authorities because it seemed so unequivocal. Ordinarily, interagency documents compiled by the Defense Intelligence Agency, the Central Intelligence Agency, the State Department's Bureau of Intelligence and Research and the National Security Agency include footnotes or similar devices in which dissent from some of the conclusions, mild or otherwise, can be expressed. This often happens when the agencies differ among themselves as to the reliability or interpretation of material.

But the 55-page report by the National Security Council, which Congress had ordered from the executive branch last year, did not include any indications of possible fallibility or doubt. Dissents were reportedly eliminated by the White House in meetings led by Robert C. McFarlane, the President's national security adviser.

The pressures involved were substantial. Conservative Republicans in Congress have been seeking official documentation of instances in which the Soviet Union has failed to abide by its arms control pledges, and the State Department has been reluctant to respond because of the complexity of the material and obvious international repercussions. These lawmakers said the White House had previously pulled its punches in detailing Soviet cheating, and some of them were not very happy about the conciliatory arms control speech that the President addressed to the Russians last week. The dissent-free intelligence report that finally emerged seemed tailored to their interests.

James F. Clarity
Warren Weaver Jr.